DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 317 146 HE 023 367

AUTHOR Stark, Joan S.; And Others
TITLE Student Goals for Colleges and Courses: A Missing Link in Assessing and Improving Academic Achievement. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION Association for the Study of Higher Education.; ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO EDO-HE-89-6
PUB DATE 89
CONTRACT RI88062014
NOTE 3p.
AVAILABLE FROM ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Reports, The George Washington University, One Dupont Circle N.W., Suite 630, Washington, DC 20036-1183 ($1.00).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; *Educational Improvement; Expectation; Higher Education; Self Concept; *Student Educational Objectives; *Student Evaluation

ABSTRACT

As the United States debates what it expects of college graduates and how to measure the achievement of these expectations, the goals of students frequently are overlooked. Goals are what individuals hope to achieve and accomplish. Currently most colleges collect information about the broad goals students hold for attending college as they enter, and the information is used for administrative planning or developing strategies to recruit and retain students. Some institutions also collect perceptions from graduating seniors and alumni about the extent to which they achieved their academic, personal, social, and vocational goals in college. Few institutions measure how student goals change from entrance to graduation or as a result of specific programs of study. Scholars have developed typologies related to student characteristics, which have been criticized for perpetuating stereotypes. New developments in social science can help guide development of a comprehensive course-specific goals inventory capable of illuminating the multidimensional goal patterns students bring to college and the classroom. Faculty can use course-level goals to improve teaching and assessment. An inventory will soon be available for use by classroom teachers and researchers. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED317146

ERIC DIGEST

EDO-HE-89-6

ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education The George Washington University One Dupont Circle, Suite 630 Washington, DC 20036

Student Goals for College and Courses: A Missing Link in Assessing and Improving Academic Achievement

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Joan S. Stark, University of Michigan
Kathleen M. Shaw, University of Michigan
Malcolm A. Lowther, University of Michigan

As the United States debates what it expects of college graduates and how to measure the achievement of these expectations, the goals of students frequently are overlooked. During discussions about higher education quality, activities such as promoting active involvement in learning, stating clear expectations, and assessing educational results have taken on increased importance for colleges and universities attempting to improve their programs. Yet in each of these activities, understanding students' educational goals is important to ensure success. Helping students take active responsibility for their education, for example, may depend on how well educators link the classroom goals they set for their students with the goals that students hold for themselves. Communicating clear expectations for students depends, in part, on understanding discrepancies between expectations instructors establish and those students accept as consistent with their own goals. In addition, accurate assessment of student outcomes fostered by the college experience should take into account students' educational goals as well as their academic preparation.

What Are Goals?

Goals are what individuals hope to achieve and accomplish. Such intentions motivate and direct human behavior. Thus, educational outcomes such as academic satisfaction, use of appropriate learning strategies, effort exerted in course work, and ultimately, academic achievement, are related to goals. Goals are not fixed; they change as individuals develop different self-views and acquire new methods of regulating their behavior. In fact, helping students to revise their goals and to improve the extent to which they control their behavior are valid educational goals.

What Information About Students' Goals Do Colleges Typically Collect?

Currently, most colleges collect information about the broad goals students hold for attending college as they enter. This information is used for administrative planning or for developing strategies to recruit and retain students. Some institutions also collect perceptions from graduating seniors and alumni about the extent to which they achieved their academic, personal, social, and vocational goals in college. Apparently, few institutions make the effort to measure how student goals change from entrance to graduation or as a result of specific programs of study.

In attempting to examine goals more systematically, scholars of higher education have developed a number of typologies based on observed student subcultures or broad intellectual orientations (for example, Katchadourian and Boli 1985). Researchers related these typologies to student characteristics believed to be relatively stable, such as learning styles and vocational orientations, and used them to increase understanding of problems such as student attrition. Typologies are criticized, however, for perpetuating stereotypes of students.

Since goals are what students hope to accomplish, and outcomes represent what actually is achieved, current trends toward measurement of educational outcomes (assessment) foster attempts to connect goals and outcomes at the course and program level. A few colleges, active in developing student assessment programs, also are collecting and using information about specific student goals for classroom work. Increasingly, educators and researchers recognize that the impact of college might be measured more effectively at the program or course level, close to the student's everyday educational environment. As yet, however, systematic attempts to include student goals in assessment and instructional improvement activities are limited.

What Are the Characteristics of a Course-Specific Student Goals Inventory?

Based on their prior preparation and self-views, students have broad goals for attending college, narrower goals for achievement in particular courses, and even more specific goals as they approach each learning task. The goals students bring to college courses are interrelated in time with the broader college goals that precede them and the narrower, specific learning task goals that help to achieve them. Ideally, then, to provide the broadest possible understanding of student goals, an inventory for classroom use would include items concerning broad goals, expectancies, and self-concept, as well as goals specific to the type of courses.

Many possible frameworks could guide development of such an inventory. For example, a framework could emphasize a single goal area, for example, goals related to intellectual growth, social and personal growth, or vocational growth. An appropriate inventory could be based, as well, on theories of intellectual development such as those established by Kolb, Perry or Bloom. New developments in social science can help to guide development of a comprehensive course-specific students goals inventory capable of illuminating the multidimensional goal patterns students bring to college and classroom.

A comprehensive model of student goals promises considerably more explanatory power than previous simpler goal models, and presents an extensive complex set of possibilities for research and classroom improvement.

HE023 367

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

How Can Instructors Use Course-Specific Goal Information?

Faculty can use students' course-level goals to improve teaching. Evidence gathered from faculty indicates that many instructors are interested in student goals, and many are willing to experiment with ways to systematically collect and use goal information (Stark, Lowther, Ryan, Bomotti, Genthon, Martens, and Haven 1988).

At the simplest and most descriptive level, goal information can help an instructor understand the diversity and intensity of student effort in a particular class. In a more elaborate way, through the process now frequently referred to as "classroom research," instructors can use goal information to discern how their goals for a particular class relate to those of their students. This can help them design classes that employ teaching approaches appropriate for their students' levels of interest and expectation. At still a more complex level, collecting and analyzing student goals can enhance formal assessment processes. Since course-level goals are measured with regard to a specific academic discipline or classroom setting, using them in the assessment process may involve statistically adjusting outcome expectations in that setting to account for goals of entering students. Assessment also may include attempts to foster and document goal changes among students.

A course-level goal inventory, the Student Goals Exploration, is current being field tested at the National Center for Research to Improve Postsecondary Teaching and Learning (NCRIPTAL). This inventory will be available soon for use by classroom teachers and researchers.

Selected References

Order ERIC documents by ED number from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service, 3900 Wheeler Avenue, Alexandria, Va., 22304. Specify microfiche (MF) or paper copy (PC), number of pages, and price code. Phone: 1-800-227-ERIC.

Astin, A.W.; Green, K.C.; and Korn, W.S. 1987. *The American Freshman.* Los Angeles: Cooperative Institutional Research Program. University of Califronia at Los Angeles.

Katchadourian, H.A. and Boli, J. 1985. *Careerism and Intellectualism Among College Students.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Locke, E. A.; Shaw, K.N.; Saari, L.M.; and Latham, G.P. 1981. "Goal Setting and Task Performance: 1969-1980." *Psychological Bulletin* 90(1): 125-152.

Markus, H. and Wurf, E. 1987. "The Dynamic Self-Concept: A Social Psychological Perspective." In *Annual Review of Psychology,* Vol. 38, ed. by M.R. Rosenzweig and L.W. Porter. Palo Alto, Calif.: Annual Reviews.

McMillan, J.H. 1988. "Beyond Value-Added Education: Improvement Alone is Not Enough." *Journal of Higher Education* 59(5): 564-579.

Stark, J.S.; et al. 1988. *Reflections on Course Planning: Faculty and Students Consider Influences and Goals.* Ann Arbor: National Center for Research to Improve Postsecondary Teaching and Learning.

Willingham, W.W. 1985. *Success in College: The Role of Personal Qualities and Academic Ability.* New York: College Entrance Examination Board.

This ERIC digest is based on a new full-length report in the *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report* series, prepared by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education in cooperation with the Association for the Study of Higher Education, and published by the School of Education at the **George Washington University.** Each report is a definitive review of the literature and institutional practice on a single critical issue. Many administrators subscribe to the series and circulate reports to staff and faculty committees with responsibility in a report's topic area. Reports are available through subscriptions for $80 per year ($90 outside the U.S.). Subscriptions begin with Report 1 and conclude with Report 8 of the current series year. Single copies, at $15 each, are available from: *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Reports,* **The George Washington University,** One Dupont Circle, Suite 630, Washington, DC 20036-1183. Or phone (202) 296-2597.

This publication was partially prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. ED RI-88-062014. The opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or the department.

The George Washington University
WASHINGTON DC